

*The Reasonableness, the Ease, the Pleasure
of the Christian Life.*

A *N^o*
DISCOURSE
Deliver'd in the
PARISH-CHURCH
of
WORCESTER,
in
WORCESTERSHIRE,
On the third Sunday in *Lent*, 1717.

Ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ Ἐλαύθερία καὶ βασιλεία τῷ Θεῷ δύλεων.
Nazian. *De Pace.*

Be ready alwayes to give an Answer to every man that asketh You a reason, of the Hope that is in You.

1 Pet. 3. 15.

Her mayes are wayes of Pleasantnes. *Prov. 3. 17.*

By *Robert Pearse*, M. A. Vice-Principal
of *St. Edmund Hall*, in *Oxford*.

O X F O R D,

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Price six Pence.

DISCOURSE

Imprimatur,

JO. B A R O N,

Vice-Can. OXON.

May 31. 1717.



To THE RIGHT REVEREND

And Learned,

WILLIAM

LORD BISHOP

OF

WORCESTER.

MY LORD,

Whoever addresses himself to Your Lordship, can never be mistaken in a Patron. He has this advantage too, that let him bring together all the Endowments of Knowledge and Practice, which ever concentr'd in One Person, and describe them in the most lively manner, yet he can never incur the imputation of Flattery, for not a Form of Religion and Learning, but the Power and Substance are his Subject.

What I now present to Your Lordship, is the Summ of several Discourses, for the Reasonableness of the Christian Life, on the Heads immediately preceding the second Particular of this Sermon; and what was deliver'd in Your Parish Church, when I had the Honour of waiting on Your Lordship. 'Tis as impossible to conceal as make known, with what Sincerity, with what Kindness, with what Editing Conversation, all who have that Happiness, are entertain'd: as impossible, as to inform the World, of all the Parts that Learning and Knowledge, they there meet with. To attempt

THE DEDICATION. EoT

attempt a description of the Whole would be as great presumption, as for a modern Painter or Moralist, to pretend to compleat the Piece left imperfect by Apelles, or to finish the Works of Panætius. To describe only One Branch of it, would take up as long a Series of Time, as That of which Your Lordship is so perfect a Master. I shall only beg leave just to mention One or Two things. ^a The inability of a Pope to resolve the Doubts of a Cardinal, and that Cardinal's Appeal to the Bishop of Worcester, who gave him full Satisfaction, without any the least Pretence to Infallibility: A steady adhering to the Interest of the Church: A courageous suffering Bonds and Imprisonment for the Protestant Religion, in the worst of Times: An Uniform Practice and Behaviour, without any little compliance with This or That Ministry: In a word, That Ancientnes of Daies, That Crown of Glory, The Hoary Head, when found as in Your Lordship, in the way of Righteousness, are what should make every person, who has any regard for Religion or Learning, acknowledge himself, what I desire, to Subscribe with the greatest Submission, Sincerity, and Respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's, most obliged,

Edmund Hall,

May 28. 1717.

most obedient

humble Servant,

ROBERT PEARSE

^a *Norissim agnoscit quatuor in locis, nempe pag. 193. p. 194. p. 201. & p. 209. Willatum L. Loidum Doctissimum Vigorn. Episcopum, in Re Catechistica facile Principem, Literis suis ad Tinterum datus, in Re obsecrante Micantissimam faciem sibi præstulisse.*

A

DISCOURSE

Deliver'd in the Parish Church

OF

Hartlebury, in Worcester-shire.

30

S. Matt. XI. Verse the last.

My yoke is easie, and my burden light.

IS certainly one of the greatest Excellencies of the Christian Institution, that it does not only propose for its End Happiness and Eternity, but likewise that the Means it enjoins conducive to this End, carry along with them their own reward, unite with the End in making one continued Scene and state of Happiness, and give to every sincere and upright person in the use of them, the greatest peace, most consummate pleasure and inexpressible satisfaction. For if we seriously reflect, that while we are doing our duty to our Maker, we at the same time promote not only our greatest Interest, but likewise the most refined Pleasures our natures are capable of; If we reflect that while

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we are serving our God we serve our Selves; If we consider that there is this great advantage when we Pray to him, that all our sins shall be done away; If we consider that while we offer up our Praises and Thanksgivings a sacrifice well pleasing acceptable to God, there arises a pious Joy and peace of mind which passes all Understanding: and that we do (as an ingenious Writer expresses it) -injoy the Perfume of our own Incense; If we consider, that while we square our lives according to the rule given us by our Saviour, all our actions glide easie, peaceable and smooth, without the least ruffle and discomposure; If lastly we reflect, that Christianity has the promise of all the good things and sublimated Pleasures of this Life annex'd to it, and Heaven in reversion: Upon these considerations we are forced to acknowledge, that there are the strongest Motives to imbrace Virtue and Religion: we are constrained to grant, that the Christian Religion is an easy, agreeable, good natured Institution, that it's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all it's paths are peace and that even in the very Observation and Keeping of it's precepts there is great reward.

Which one consideration alone, abstracting from all the other Advantages of Christianity carries force and strength sufficient with it, to have more than ordinary influence on the Life and Actions of any rational Being.

In the common course of Life, that which makes men resolve and set about any matter, is a firm Belief that the End they aim at is possible to be obtained; and that of all the Objects of their choice which is soonest and most eagerly pursued and imbraced, is, what least clashes with those palli-

ons and desires which Nature has implanted in us, which does not offer it self to us under the appearance of being rugged, grating, and uneasie to flesh and blood, or any way destructive of, and lessening our present happiness and Injoyments. Whatever comes thus recommended needs no other foil or Advantage to set it off, or procure our esteem ; Mens inclinations immediately close in with it ; and they are perswaded, that what is so pleasing and agreeable must in some degree render them happy ; Happiness and Pleasure being constant Companions, and alway found together. Anger, Malice, Revenge , and the like passions and motives may sometimes put men upon dangerous as well as unlawful Enterprizes ; But after all, if we seriously take a view of the springs of our actions which are within us ; if we reflect what 'tis from without , that sooneft works upon us , we shall find Pleasure to be the leading Passion in human nature ; and among all the Laws by which we ought to govern our actions, whether divine or human, natural, revealed or positive, we shall find those Precepts best obeyed, those Rules of duty best kept and observed, which are easie and light to Mankind.

Accordingly our Saviour who throughly understood our nature, and perfectly knew what was in Man, who was acquainted with what would sooneft prevail upon us, applyes himself in my Text to this Passion, and makes use of the Easiness of the Observation of the Christian Law, as one of the strongest Motives why men should imbrace it. And at the 27th Verse of this Chapter, haying made known how that the Father loved the Son and had given all power to him, that the Keys of

death and Hell, and all things relating to Salvation, were committed to him, that the Scribes and Pharisees and most learned Doctors of the Law (who laid Burdens grievous to be born on men) knew not his Fathers Will as to the Dispensation of the Gospel : having shewn this his Power, Wisdom, and mediatorial Office, he concludes with a kind and indearing invitation to all those who were weary and heavy laden, with a sense of their sins, and a disquiet arising from the guilt of them ; to those who were under the Burden of the Jewish Law; to those who were in trouble and affliction (For in these several senses ^{the} οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφοβησμένοι are explained by the best Commentators) desiring them to come unto or believe on him, who could alone set them free from all trouble and distress, and bestow upon them that peace of Soul and Rest which all pious Persons enjoy here in this life, and that Eternal Rest which remains for the People of God hereafter : *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you Rest.* And in the next Verse he exhorts them to take his Yoke upon them and to learn of him, to copy after that correct Pattern which he had set them, though he very well knew, that when all was done, they would still fall short, and want those finishing Strokes, which were in the divine Original.

When he had made this invitation, lest men should be awed into too great a distance by the consideration of his Majesty, his Power, and his

α Δεῦτε εργάσεσθε με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες Εἰ πεφοβησμένοι, ἢντος δὲντα τοῦ διδούσαντος πάντες οἱ σὺν φρεγτίσι, οἱ σὺν λύπαις, οἱ σὺν αἰμαρτίαις. D. Chrysost. in locum.

Greatness

Greatness; or be terrified with the thoughts of his Laws and injunctions carrying too much severity and strictnes along with them; lest the Yoke which he proposed should be thought so far from giving Rest to mens Souls as by its weight and unsuitableness to our Natures, to prove galling and vexatious, to stop us in our race, to depress and rob men of the Pleasures and Enjoyments of life; lest they should frame such wrong conceptions of him and his Doctrine, he lets them know that he who was their Example, their Saviour, their God, was humble, meek, and lowly, and that all those who were alike qualified with himself, had the greatest share in his love and affections; *Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.* And then he subjoines the most engaging and powerful Incitement to Christian obedience, such as could not but warm the affections, and inflame the heart of the most cold and indifferent person, such as exactly suited and was agreeable to the temper and inclinations of Mankind; namely, that the way to happiness was by him made so smooth and plain, and the highest glory not only placed by him, within the reach of labour and industry, but that any man who was not extremely wanting to himself, who was not fond of Ruin and Misery, and in love with Calamity and Destruction, might with exceeding ease, Joy, and Pleasure, persevere in a course of Religion, till arrived to the greatest Perfection, and his labours were crowned with Rest and Immortality, *for my Yoke is easie and my Burden is light.*

The word *χεντης* which is here render'd easie, is by most Interpreters taken in a much more large and

and extensive meaning, as to signify, ^b *Suave, com-
modum, blandum, facile, lene, benignum, & gratio-
sum*, and accordingly the Reverend Dr *Hammond* find
fault with the common Translation of the Epithet
χρηστός, as being imperfectly render'd, it not only
signifying easie, but in the best Greek Authors
denotes benign, pleasant, good, profitable, and graci-
ous. And in the Scriptures of the Old and New
Testament it has the same Meaning; Thus in the
34th *Psal.* and the 8th Verse, where the Original
signifies good or gracious, the Septuagint render
it *εὸν χρηστὸν οὐ κύριος*, and the vulgar Latin, *Quod suau-
fit Dominus*, O Taste and see that the Lord is graci-
ous. And in the New Testament St *Peter* and St *Paul*
use it in the same sense; the former saying *χρηστὸς οὐ Θεός*, the Lord is bountiful, and the latter in his
second chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, has the
πὸν χρηστὸν τὸ Θεὸν the bounty, or as 'tis commonly ren-
der'd, the Goodness of God. So that 'tis the same
as if our Saviour had said, The Yoke which I lay
upon my Disciples is not that rigorous Observa-
tion of the Law, so much press'd by the Pharisees
but the Submission and Obedience to be paid to
my Government, the observation of the moral
Law, and the Spiritual worship which the Gospel
requires in the room of the Jewish dispensation,
most gracious, good, and pleasant; the most easie
profitable rule of Life which could be given to

b 'O γε ζητεῖς με χρηστόν.] *Vetus*, Jugum enim meum suave. *Pulchri-*
nec recte faciunt qui corrigitur. Sunt enim mandata Christi non sol-
etōντα, sed etiam idēa, τοῖς μηδοῖς, sc. & τοῖς λοιποῖς, & dictio χρη-
στόν Latino suavis, belle congruit. Sap. 8. v. 1. Διατίνει δὲ τοις μηδοῖς
εἰς πίπας εἰπώσως, & θοκεῖ τὸ πάντα χρηστόν, i. e. ut sēpiissime citato-
locus, ab omnium etatum præstantissimis Theologis: & disponit om-
Suaviter. Glossarium vetus: Suaves χρηστός, Suaves χρηστός, Suavis χρη-
στός, Suaviter χρηστός. Lexicon Græco-Lat. Vetus χρηστός frugalis, Su-
utilis, jucundus. Boissius.

men; and as we acknowledge in our common, daily, and excellent Form of Prayer, a perfect Freedom.

From the words thus explained, I shall in my following Discourse consider,

First, Why the Christian Religion, or the Precepts and doctrine, deliver'd by our Saviour to mankind, are said to be a Yoke and Burden.

Secondly, The Reasons why the Yoke of Christ, or the Duties and Precepts enjoined in the Gospel and Christian dispensation, are easie if consider'd simply and in themselves, or comparatively, and in relation to all the other Religions, that have appear'd in the world.

Thirdly, I shall Evince, That the Burden of Christ is also light, by removing some Objections which are usually made against the living up to the Rules of Christianity, against the taking up the Cross of Christ, or walking so as becomes the Gospel.

Fourthly, I shall conclude with a brief Reflection, from the Consideration of the Ease and Pleasure, accompanying our Obedience, and walking thus worthy of God.

*First, The Precepts and Government of our Saviour, that Faith by which we ought to walk, and the Spiritual Worship we ought to pay, are said to be a Yoke, because substituted in the room of the Mosaic institution, which was acknowledged to be such by those under either dispensation. Thus in the 15th chap. of the Acts of the Apostles, in the dispute between *Paul, Barnabas, and St Peter,**

St Peter, with ^c Cerinthus and some others who came down from Judea, and taught that Circumcision and the observation of the Ceremonial Law were necessary to Salvation, and that Christ by his death and institution of the Sacrament of Baptism, as simply necessary to salvation, did not acquire a perfect freedom from Circumcision in the Christian Church ; St Peter there urges against the imposing of the Law, that their Fathers were saved, and they themselves could be justifed, only by the Grace of the Messiah, and that therefore to command Circumcision and the observation of the Law, was to tempt God, and to put such a Yoke upon the neck of the Disciples, as neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear. And St Paul reasoning on the same subject in his Epistle to the Galatians, delivers his opinion agreeable to this Decree of the Council of the Apostles, and says, That still to adhere to and religiously observe the Ceremonial Law, as necessary to Justification, was in reality to disclaim and deny the Sufficiency of Christ's Satisfaction ; For I say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing, stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again, with the yoke of bondage. In which, and other places of Scripture, the Jewish Law is called with the greatest reason, a Yoke ; because of the number and variety of the Ceremonies ; the difficulty and expense with which they were perform'd ; the expence of all the parts of the worship ; and after all, their weakness, their insufficiency, their unprofitableness, not being able to render the performers perfect.

as to the Conscience, or reconcile any one to an offended God; being only a shadow of good things to come; a faint and obscure resemblance and Type of that compleat and perfect Sacrifice, of that victorious Conqueror, who should put all things in Subjection under him, of that glorious Sun of Righteousness, at whose Rise and Brightness, all those Shadows and lesser Lights, were to disappear and vanish.

Another reason why the Christian Law may be said to be a Yoke and Burden, by our Saviour; is, because as a Prophet and King, he deliver'd such a Doctrine from Heaven, as fills the minds of all sensual Persons with Regret, with Fear, and Anguish; and threatens Eternal Damnation to all those, who persevere in a Course of Sin and Impiety. And thus their Predictions of impending judgments on any Place or Nation, are by the Prophets stiled ^a Burdens, not only with respect to the Sorrow which they felt in themselves, but likewise in relation to the Message which they deliver'd from Heaven. But that which our Saviour here understands by these two Terms, ^b a Yoke, and Burden, is, by the former, the Precepts and Rules of the Gospel: and by the latter, the taking up of his Cross: by the one, an Acknowledgment of his Dominion, a sincere Performance of his Service, a steady, unshaken Faith, and an uniform Obedience: by the other, a ready Submission to his Will in the most difficult and uneven Ways of Life, a patient Possession of our souls under all the Affronts, Indignities, and Af-

^a Onus] Prophetia tristis. *Grot.*

^a Crit. Sac.

^b Imperium, Evangelium, man-

flictions, which can be offer'd, or befall Mankind, upon account of the Profession of the Christian Religion. Both these and all the other Parts of our Duty, whether they relate to God, our Neighbour, or our Selves, are here said by our Saviour to be so far from dissatisfying, in the Execution or Event, as that to every willing mind, they are Easie and Light.

Easie, Because they Prescribe, and mark out to us a Way of Life, every way agreeable to Reason, set free from the Bondage of unlawful Passions and Desires; neither can any thing add Weight to it, and render it heavy, but the Corruption which arises from the Depravation of Human Nature to correct and change which, to exalt our Nature to the highest Pitch of Purity, Holyness, and Perfection; to raise them from the human to the divine, and to make us as Gods, being the principal End and Design of Religion.

Easie, when once we have Accustomed our selves to a religious Course of Life, however like our Cloaths, it may seem straight and close, at the first putting on.

Easie, as we have the divine Assistance, and do not the Service required of us in our Strength. God writes his Laws in our Hearts, works in us to will and to do, and purges and takes care of those Branches which are in a flourishing State, that they may bring forth more Fruit.

Easie, as the divine Love constrains us to Obedience; as God is graciously pleased to accept of our Sincerity, instead of keeping the whole Law.

Infinitely more Easie, than the Servitude and Drudgery, the Tyranny, the Slavery, and Oppression of Sin and Vice; than the being taken care of

tive by our Spiritual Enemies, and brought into Subjection, to the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

Lastly, Easie, by Reason of the inviting Prospect of a Crown of Righteousness promised, and laid up for those, who finish their Course as they ought, and keep the Faith; by reason of our Saviour's annexing to Sufferings which are but for a Moment, the Reward of an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

But not to inlarge distinctly on each of these; the Truth of the second Particular I proposed, which was to show, That the Duties of Christianity are Easie and light; will Sufficiently appear, from an Inquiry into the following Propositions.

First, Because whatever we are commanded to Believe or Practice, in respect of being Christians; we are obliged to Believe and Perform, in consideration that we are Men.

Secondly, Because the Cardinal Duties enjoined us in the Christian Law, relating to God or Man, carry nothing of Difficulty and Uneasiness along with them, but give a rational Pleasure, Substantial Joy, and Satisfaction.

Thirdly, Because, if we make a Comparison between the Precepts of our Saviour and other Lawgivers, we shall find that the Gospel, as of greater Worth, Excellency, and Perfection, so the Practice of the Duties required in it, are more Easie, more Pleasant, and more Delightful.

First, whatever we are commanded to Believe or do, in respect that we are Christians; we are obliged to Believe and Perform in Consideration that we are Men. For Christianity in all its Parts, is Reasonable Service, and every way suited to our Nature; not in any one of its Precepts indeavour-

ing to fix a new Stamp and Impression upon it, but only to render that Divine Image, received at the Creation, more bright and visible ; and by pressing the Imitation, and Observation of the Rules deliver'd by the Second, wiping off all those spots and stains, and repairing the breaches made in our nature, by the Transgression of the First Adam. If indeed with respect to the Objects of our Faith, men will deny, that whatever could not be discover'd by the force of Reason without the Assistance of Revelation, is rational ; though not in the least contradictory to Reason ; and though grounded upon Gods Veracity, and consequently most Reasonable to be believed, because without That, Reason it self would be fluctuating and doubting : If they will turn such Advocates for Reason, as to place it above the Doctrines of Christianity, when the Wisdom of God has had such a peculiar Regard to our nature, as to submit them to Reason ; then the difference is of their own making, and not in the Nature of the Things themselves. And if in relation to Practice, men will ascribe that Disrelish they find in themselves of the Will of God, to the Precepts of the Gospel, when 'tis owing to their own ^avitiated Judgment and perverted Will ; If men will thus confound the Reason of things, and understand by Nature the Corruptions of Nature, then it must be acknowledged that the Christian Law, is a flat Contradiction to Humanity ; and that the Directions we receive from Nature and from the Gospel, lead to Ends that are widely different, and

^a When Men are sunk in sensuality, their Reason becomes 'ορθος της Αρενος. See likewise *Wilh. Nat. Rel.* p. 36.

opposite to each other. For the Marks and Boundaries which the Gospel sets us, in running the Race of our Duty, oppose and exclude all Un-godliness, and whatever tends to Debase nature, taken in it's true Notion : It is every where thwarting to the Sensitive Appetite, limits and checks all its Natural Inclinations; every where recommends as Ornaments, that Meekness and Humility so conspicuous in its blessed Author; every where condemns the pride, which makes men apt to swell with an high Opinion of their own Worth and Merit; governs and keeps down those otherwise raging and boisterous Passions of Anger, Wrath, and Malice, which often boil to so great a Height, without any Fewel, just Cause, or Provocation.

But then should we take Nature, not in this corrupted Sense, for the Vices, for the Shame, and for the Reproach of Nature, but as freed from all vicious Habits and Prepossessions of Judgment; or being overborn by Temptations; and then all that the Gospel delivers, all divine Truths, moral Good, and moral Evil, may with Safety, nay ought to be subjected to our Inquiry and Understandings; that we may proceed, believe, and act upon rational Grounds, *and be able alway to give a Reason to every one that asks us, of the Hope that is in us.* They ought to be subjected to our Inquiry, that we may not confound those Things of God, which are Manifest and clearly seen, with those which are Unsearchable and past finding out. In short, They must be submitted to our Inquiry, That we may know and perceive, That what Christianity commands us to Assent to, or put in Practice, is approved of by the Light of Nature; and that what Evil

Evil the Gospel condemns, is censured by Right Reason.

Are we obliged as Christians, To believe the Existence of a God, and his Attributes, that he is a Being of infinite Power, incomprehensible Wisdom, Omnipresent, and under a Necessity of being Eternally happy? As Men, we are certain of our own Existence, that we could not give ourselves a real Being, when first we were not, and that if we go back in the Chain of Causes, Reason will lead us to this certain Truth, That we ought to stop at a Being, which received not its Beginning from another; but is Boundless, Self-existent, and from all Eternity; *The invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World, being clearly seen and understood, from the Things that are made.*

Are we as Christians obliged to believe, that our Souls are Immortal and Immortal, and that we should not fear those, who are not able to destroy the Soul? As Men, we are certain from the Ideas we have of Thinking; from the Principle of motion which we find within us; and from the Consideration that ^a Mere Matter, though the Parts were never so minute or rarifyed, their motion never so violent, or whatever way Determined and inflamed, could never Kindle up into Thought, That our Souls are Immortal Substances, & consequently Immortal.

*a Non Animam totam perparvis esse necesse est
Seminibus,*

*Quatinus omnis ubi est soto jam corpore cessit,
Nec deficit ponderis hilum :*

*Quod genus est Bacchi cum flos evanuit, aut cum
Spiritus Unguenti suavis diffugit in auras.*

Lucret. Lib. 3. l. 223. Edit. Creech.

Should

Should we, from these Principles of Natural Religion, which, though required as a Part of the Gospel, are Immutable, and the same under every Dispensation, pass to the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ; such as a Belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Repentance from dead Works, Faith towards God, Resurrection of the dead, and eternal Judgment: should we examine the several Doctrines deliver'd by our Saviour and his Apostles, we should find that These, and all the Duties of Human Life, might be clearly Demonstrated to be agreeable to Reason^a; and that not to give our Assent to them, and Practise accordingly, we must do Violence to our Mind and Nature. For the same God which deliver'd the Gospel to Mankind, gave them likewise Reason; and therefore the Gospel could be no other, than what Reason should Dictate, unless we can be so stupid as to Think, That a Reasonable Creature as Man is, should have an Unreasonable Law given him, to Walk by. This that great^b Master of Reason, the Author of the *Reasonableness of Christianity* grants; who though in many Places, he omits some Fundamental Truths; and delivers Others, quite contrary to sound Doctrine; yet in other Places again he Affirms, that 'tis no Diminution, that Reason gives Suffrage to all the Parts of Christianity; He Affirms that we cannot withhold our Assent, from those things which We cannot Comprehend, without acting Contrary to Reason; which assures us they are deliver'd by such a Being, as cannot be

^a *Dodwell's Letter of Adv.* p. 132, 133. and p. 182. ^b See Mr. *Lock's Reasonableness of Christianity*.

Deceived, and will not Impose upon, or Deceive his Creatures ^a.

I shall only farther add on this Particular, the Words of the Judicious ^b Author of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, towards the End of his First Book; the Scripture, says he, is fraught with Laws of Nature; insomuch that *Gratian* defining Natural Right, Termeth Natural Right, That which the Books of the Law and Gospel do contain; Neither is it vain that the Scripture aboundeth with so great Store of Laws in this kind; For they are either such as we of our selves could not easily have found out, and then the Benefit is not small, to have them readily set down to our hands; or if they be so Clear and Manifest, that no Man indued with Reason, can lightly be ignorant of them, yet the Spirit borrowing them from the School of Nature, as serving to prove Things less manifest, the very applying them to Cases Particular, is not without singular Use and Profit. And be they plain or obscure, the *Evidence of Gods own Testimony added unto the Natural Assent of Reason*, concerning the Certainty of them, doth not a little comfort, and Confirm the same.

But *Secondly*, The Cardinal Duties enjoined us in the Christian Law, relating to God or Man,

a Whoever says we must renounce reason to believe Religion, betrays it, for as soon as we lay aside Reason we can apprehend nothing of Revelation, &c. A man must not part with his Reason or stifle its Light, to perceive the Beauty of Christianity: Such a method seems to be the infallible way of establishing all manner of Errors: on the contrary the better a man reasons, the more he'll be convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion. Reason and Revelation never quarrel with one another; and if we see the contrary in School Divinity, 'tis because what they call Reason or Revelation, is often a mere Phantom substituted in their room. *L. Cler.* concerning the Causes of unbelief; *B. 2. Cap. VI.* *b Hooker I. 1. S. 12.* of *Ecc. Pol.* and the Beginning of his *Discourse on Pride.*

carry

carry Nothing of Difficulty along with them, but give a rational Pleasure, Joy, and Satisfaction.

When the Pharisee either for his own Instruction, or a Proof of our Saviours Knowledge, ask'd him which was the First and great Commandment, our Saviour thought not fit to satisfy his Inquiry by a direct Answer, and giving the Preference to any one Precept, but declares to him the End of all Religion, and the Two Hinges on which all the Laws of God were hung, and turned, Piety and Charity ; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as thy Self, on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* All the Righteousness we are enjoined in order to our future Happiness, is included in this breif Sum of our Duty, the Love of God and our Neighbour. Now what more easie task could the Founder of any Religion have set his Followers, than such as This, which they could not but Voluntarily have chosen, suppose it had never been enjoyned. For to love that Divine and Infinite Object, which has all Excellency and Perfection, and is in it's own Nature most Amiable ; To Love, to Praise, to Magnifie, to Adore, That gracious and merciful God, who hath given to us Life, and Breath, and all Things : To Love, to Praise, to Magnifie, to Adore, That gracious and merciful God, by whom we are not only fearfully and wonderfully made, and continually preserv'd, but what is a much greater Obligation to Love him, by whom we are Redeemed, we are Sanctified, and Restored to that Happiness, we had forfeited and lost ; To Love, to Praise, to

Magnify, to Adore such a Saviour and mighty Deliverer, and in Subordination to him, to love our Neighbour, to assist him to the utmost of our Power; if hungry to feed, if naked to cloath, if sick to visit, and by this to free our Selves as well as Him, from the pain we were under to behold him in Want, in Misery, and Distress; what Pleasure and Recreation, rather than Servitude is this! How do such expressions of Love, naturally beget suitable Returns! How can a Creature endowed with Reason, or sensible of Favours, ever cease from loving, without the least Hypocrisy, without any Competition from the things of this World, and the greatest Ardency, That Wisdom, That Mercy, That Goodnes, which has thus made his Interest his Duty, commanded Pleasure as his Service, and enjoined what Nature and Gratitude prompted him to, as the summ of his Obedience. What is natural must be pleasant, what causes Pleasure can never be uneasy, what produces delight cannot be thought burdensome and heavy. For nature's postures are alway easy: 'Tis only putting the wheels in the motion they were contriv'd for, and going just as we were made.

This Joy and Love the Royal Psalmist felt, and declares with a deep, a serious and affectionate Thoughtfulness, when he had thrown off the Burden of his Sins, which were too heavy for him to bear; *Thy Statutes are righteous O Lord, more desirable than gold, Thy Testimonies are the Joy of my heart.*

Neither are the Duties which are Reducible to these two, the Duties contained in each Table, and those in our Saviour's Divine Discourse on the Mount, which make and adorn the Christian Life, less plain and easie; and the practice of them

is highly beneficial, supposing there was no Life after this.

For Meekness and Humility, a Gentleness of Spirit not to be disturbed by Provocations, and a Lowliness of Mind, esteeming others better than our selves, are there in the first place recommended; Virtues which every one has it in his own Breast as easily to make Choice of, as well as our blessed Lord himself; and which have a Natural Tendency to promote Peace and Comfort.

As the Government of our Passions, and preserving Purity and Holiness both in Body and Soul, carry us to a nearer Resemblance and Image of God; So to be content with such things as we have, with a patient Resignation to his Providence, makes all the Changes and Conditions of Life set easy, puts all Difficulties and Misfortunes out of Countenance; and we have the promise of infinite Justice and Goodness, that our being satisfied with little shall qualify us for more.

As the denial of our selves is render'd easy by the thoughts on the rewards of another Life; So the not avenging our selves, but rather giving place unto Wrath, not only shows a Greatness of Mind, by creating in us a Calmness of Spirit, but in some measure, anticipates the Joy of a future State.

As the rendering to every man his due, is approved by our Conscience, and makes all safe without us; so a sincere Repentance and sorrow for sin, is what alone can recollect, unite, and fix the Powers of our distracted Souls, and with a spiritual Joy and Complacency reinstate us in the Favour of God.

In short, To be subject to Superiors, obliging to Equals, condescending to men of low Estate,

to love and honour all men, to pity ignorance, to contemn Malice, to be above injuries, to be affectionate one towards another, when reviled to bless, when evil spoken of to rejoice, when scorn'd and rejected to overcome evil with good, to do all to the Praise and Glory of God, to govern our selves by a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, and to be as Happy as we can, are the only severe and intolerable Precepts, which our Saviour has deliver'd.

I shall not insist on this, That we have our Saviours Example as well as Command, to render the Performance of our duty easie ; That what he has taught, he practised ; what he has commanded us to bear, he has first taken upon himself ; He fasted, he prayed, he loved, he forgave, he dyed, and for those who were his Enemies.

I shall not insist on the Beauty of a Virtue and Religion, and the Deformity of Sin and Vice ; That the Religious person is free from care, not elate in Prosperity, content in Adversity, and quiet at all times : The Profane and Irreligious is alway distracted between hope and fear, ever dissatisfied, never at peace with his God, his Neighbour, or himself : That the Religious person has a sure fortress, and is conducted Safe through the Storms and Tempests of this world ; The Irreligious and man void of Piety has no where to fix, and meets with daily Disappointments : That the Religious person is alway, like the God he adores, one and the same : That the Profane and Irreligious wanders in as many and different Ways, as there are Errors in the World : In short, That Religion like

a Forma cœn Facies Honesti si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles (ut ait Pla-
to) amores excitaret. *Cic. De Offic. Lib. I.*

Physick rightly applyed, works a Cure and saves Mankind, and that Vice and Irreligion as certainly poison, load Men with Diseases, and at last will sink them in Eternal Death and Ruin.

Thirdly, If we make a Comparison between the Precepts of our Saviour, and those of other Law-givers, we shall find that the Gospel as of greater Excellency and Perfection, than all other Religions that ever appear'd in the world, so the Duties of it are more Easie, more Pleasant, more Delightful.

Christianity does not suffer any kind of Vice, but strictly requires that whoever makes Profession of it, should act, live, and be indeed, what he professes himself, and not rest content with the bare name of a Christian. By the Christian Institution, Theft, Murder, Intemperance, and such like, stand every where condemned; whereas all other Systems of Laws imposed by men, allow or recommend some one or more of these sins. Some thought ^a Rapine and Injustice no Crimes: Others approved of Homicide; and a third of Adultery; Zeno and *Chrysippus* (As *Diogenes Laertius* observes of them) held Self Murder lawful and Reasonable; The Wisest men in the Heathen world,

^a Τὸ γδὲ κλήψι. *Arrianus Lib. III. cap. 7.* Ἡ ἀδίκια &c. *Laert. in E-*
picato Lib. X. seg. 15 I.

— Siquis sinus abditus ultra,
Siqua foret tellus fulvum quæ mitteret aurum,
Hostis erat. — *Petron.*

— εἰ δὲ πῆπεν δρός
Τοῖς Σκυρπάταις δόξα εἰ μείχης ἀγάν,

T' ἀλλ' ὅτις ἵστη μηδεὶς βελτίως. *Eurip. Androm.* Vide *Poly-*
biou Hist. 3. & Florum Lib. 3. cap. 9, Plutarchum Catone. Thucydidem de-
nique Lib. I. Oi γδὲ Ελλῆς ἵρατον τοὺς λησταῖς &c. Vide Atheneum, La-
gantium, Laerium, & Tertull. Apol. c. 9.

thought ^a Revenge reconcilable with the strictest Religion and Piety, affirming it to be *Natura Iuris*. I shall only give three short Instances out of the most celebrated *Moralists*, to shew what vastly different Opinions they had of Virtue and Vice, from those who judge of them by the Law of Christ; how they called Evil Good, and Good Evil, put Light for Darkness, and Darkness for Light. *Cicero* at the end of his third Book *De Natura Deorum*, expressly asserts, that we are not indebted to God for the least *Virtue*; *Virtutem nemo acceptam Deo retulit propter Virtutem enim jure laudamur, quod non contineret si donum à Deo, non à Nobis haberemus*; Whereas 'tis as much owing to God that we Think, Speak or Act aright, and that every Action of our Lives is not a sin, as Sounds and Harmony are owing to the Hand which Touch the Instrument. ^b *Plutarch* in the Life of *Lycurgus*, mentions this Law for Murder, Τὸ δὲ γενῆθεν, εἰ μὴ εὐπογεῖς εἴη, καὶ ρωμαλέον τιθεῖται δύον, εἰ δὲ αἰγεῖς καὶ αμερόφοι, απέπεμπον εἰς τὰς λευκαὶς Αποθέσεις, τὴν Βαραθράδη τόπον. And lastly, *Seneca* after he had urged his other Rules for procuring Tranquillity of Mind, concludes thus in Favour of Intemperance and Debauchery; *Solon*, *Arcesilaus* and *Cato*, says he, were intemperate, and Intemperance shall sooner be thought a Virtue than *Cato* Vitious; and then adds, *Nonnunquam usque ad c Ebrie*

^a *Aristot ad Nicomach. IV.* Δοκεῖ γὰρ ἐκ αἰθίασθαι τὸ λυπητόν, μηδέ προς τὸ σύντονον ἀμερόφοις. τὸ δὲ σερπηλακέρορος μίγχας, ἀνεργτικόν. *Odi hominem & otero: utinam ulcisci possem.* *Cic. ad Atticum.* *Si ulciscar facinora singula, quemadmodum à quibusque sum provocatus.* *Idem. In Antonium.* ^b *Vidē insuper Terentii Hecyram.* *Et Justinianus Apolog. 2do.*

^c *Oīos τοι Μενέλαος θεοί ποίησαν μεριστον.*
Θυτοῖς τοι θράσποισιν δόποικραστοι μελισθεντοι. Homeris.

Oīos τοι χαρίστι μηγας πέλει πτερον μιδον.
Antiphanes Poeta imagine arborum ad hanc rei. utitur, qua justa fera afficit, & semper irrigat, optime crescunt.

tatem veniendum, eluit enim curas, & ab imo Animum
movet, tristis Sobrietas removenda, non potest Grande
aliquid nisi Mota Mens. Tunc vulgaria & solita contem-
nit, instinctuque sacro surgit excelsior, tunc demum ali-
quid canit grandius ore mortali. Non potest sublime
quicquam & in arduo possum contingere, quamdui apud
se est; desciscat, oportet, a Solito, & efferatur, & Mor-
deat Frans, & Rectorem rapiat suum, eoque ferat quo
per se timuisset ascendere.

And if these were the Precepts of their most exalted Spirits, and whose Minds were raised above the common Sort, how great must be the Darkness of the ordinary Persons, among whom Evil Spirits, Things Inanimate, Diseases, Infirmities, and the Enemy of our Happiness the Devil himself, is Deifyed and Adored? What an intolerable Yoke must it be, where the Votary is of more Worth, than that to which he pays his Devotions; Where the Person the more Religious he is, becomes the more Miserable; instead of having his Nature raised, is Crushed beneath the condition of the Brutes which perish. This doubtless is such an insupportable service, as the very Thoughts only, without submitting to it, cannot but terrify, and disturb the Ease and Quiet of any considerate, Thinking Being.

If from this Darkness of the Heathen World, we pass to the Light afforded the Jewish Nation, God's peculiar People, that too grows faint in Comparison with the glorious Light of the Gospel; and the Distinction of Days, and Meats, Circumcision,

^a Ωμέ ελεύθερος ταις κομισταῖς, τοῖς τὸις εργατικοῖς εἰς τὸν κολοσσοῦ ἔχετο τοῖς
κομιστοῖς οὐκον, ὅπερ εἰ τοῖς κομισταῖς κακίστος. ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ εἰδικεῖτοι τοῖς κομιστοῖς.
Ding. Con. Cels. See Heb. 7. 19. 22. and 8. 6. 2 Tim. 1. 10.

Divorce, innumerable Rites, and Sacrifices which could never take away Sin, make that a heavy Yoke and Performance; To no purpose were such Oblations, they were tiresome and an abomination to that God, which required a Payment of Vows, Thanksgiving, a broken and contrite Heart, to be worship'd in Spirit and in Truth; *To come and bow before him with thousands of Rams, and ten thousand Rivers of Oyl, to give the first born for Transgression, the Fruit of the body, for the Sin of the Soul was not available; He hath shew'd Thee O man what is good, he hath plainly made known, such easy Duties as Christianity has commanded; And what does the Lord require more, but that We should do Justly, that We should love Mercy, and that We should walk humbly with our God.*

The Religion of Mahomet, who conscious of the Unreasonableness of his Institution, as strictly forbids its Professors to search into it, as the Church of *Rome* does the Reading the Scriptures, can no way be Compared with that of Christ; The Purity, Holiness, and Sublimity of whose Doctrines, challenge as great a Superiority over it, as its Blessed Author, The power of God, and the Wisdom of God, does over an Infirm, Weak, and ^a Debauched Creature. For That permits the greatest Indecencies, and Luxury; Whereas Christianity requires Holiness as a Necessary Condition of being Happy. That's wholy taken up in the Externals of Worship, and in Things in themselves Indifferent; ^b This requires Truth in the Inward

^a Mahumetes, late sparsæ Religionis Auctor, projectus ad libidinem per omnem vitam, ne à suis quidem negatur. *Inquit Grotius.* ^b Cultus autem Deorum est optimus, idemque castissimus atque sanctissimus, plenissimusque Pietatis, ut eos semper pura, integra, incorrupta & mente & voce veneremur. *Cic. de Nat. Deor.*

Parts, clean Hands and a pure Heart, which hath not lift up it self unto Vanity, and is employed about what only is Valuable in us, what is Spiritual, and what is Immortal.

Having thus set forth the Excellency of the Gospel, and the Ease of the Yoke of Christ, I proceed in the

Third and last place to Evinced, that the Burden of Christ is light; by removing some Objections, which are usually made against the taking up the Cross of Christ, and Walking so as becomes the Gospel.

I shall consider only such Objections as relate to our Practice; having before observed, in respect to our Belief, That it can never be an Imposition on our Understandings, To believe what we have Reason to believe; and that the Testimony of God, ought to be of more Force to cause in us a Certainty of what we Believe, than the plainest Argument and Demonstration.

And first, the very Words a Yoke and Ease, seem to differ as much as Pain and Pleasure; the First giving a Check to our desires, the Latter promising us freedom: The one seems to restrain, The other to inlarge our Liberty; for a Yoke ever implies Labour and Vexation, and consequently whoever stoops to it, must bid adieu to Ease and Injoyment, and as long as it continues on him, expect to be Miserable. A Burden of whatever kind is clogging, and hinders a man in the Pursuit of what would give him Delight, and therefore must either be thrown off, or the Person become insensible, unable to relish the refined Pleasures, Debauchery, and Sensuality of a Gentleman, and by degrees grow as heavy and stupid, as the Load he labours under.

Besides, our Saviour in the 7th Chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, where he lays down the two Ultimate Ends of all mens actions, Everlasting Misery, or Eternal Happiness; and the different Ways which lead to each; describes the Passage to Life and Glory in such a Manner, to be so Close and Narrow, as that there are but Few of such a Size, as are able to press through it, *because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be which find it;* Few so discerning as to find it out, fewer so resolute as to continue walking in it, 'till they come to that End, where they should rest from all their Labours.

To this as a farther Objection, may be added, what the Scriptures in several other Places affirm, That those who enter upon a Course of that Religion our Saviour instituted, must look for no better Treatment than the blessed Author of it; *The Servant cannot expect to be above his Lord, 'tis enough if he be as his Master: If they have persecuted Me, says our Saviour, they will persecute You also;* If he was made perfect through Sufferings, his Disciples must not expect to become like Him, by an Exemption from them; And Lastly, to be Victorious, to overcome and take of the Tree of Life, they must imitate him, who indured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself.

'Tis likewise required as a Condition of becoming a Christian, and has been found Experimentally true, that all who will live Godly must Suffer, and take up their Cross daily; *That whosoever will save his Life must lose it; That he who hates not his Father and Mother, and his own Life, cannot be Christ's Disciple;* And is not worthy the Reward he intends to bestow upon such at the last.

These

These together with the Austerities of Fastings oft, Repentance, Subjecting our Passions, Abstinence and Self-denyal, an Universal Benevolence, and that Grand Objection, the Command to Love even a Doubling, Tricking, Prevaricating Enemy, are what is most Shocking in our Religion; and the most Material Objections, which are used to establish the Reverse of the Text; and to prove, That we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God; that the Wicked are alway conspiring against the Just, to render his Life uneasy; For he was made to reprove their Thoughts, he is greivous unto them to behold; because his Life is not like other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion; he maketh his Boast that God is his Father, Therefore, they say, Let us see if his Words be true, Let us examine him with Despiffulness and Torture, that we may know his Meekness and prove his Patience; Let us condemn him with a shameful Death, for by his own saying, he shall be respected.

In answer to the first of these Objections, it may be sufficient to reply; That 'tis a wrong Notion of Liberty, which is placed in a Freedom from all Laws, and a Restraint even from Vice; For as where there is no Law, there can be no Transgression; so where no Law is, there can be no Liberty; Men would be Slaves not only to the Passions of others, but by using Liberty as an Occasion to the Flesh, be the greatest Slaves to their own impetuous Lusts and Desires. Mankind would then act without controul: every Man's hand would be lifted up against his Neighbour: Justice, Equity, Temperance, and Sobriety would be banish'd out of the

World: Instead of a real Liberty they would use Licentiousness: Instead of living Free, they would take such a Liberty of Conscience, as to huddle and confound things Sacred and Profane; Turn Religion into Rebellion, and Faith into Faction; Despise, Violate, and Trample upon all Right, and banish Virtue out of the World. But then Christianity secures from all these Inconveniences, and yet is a perfect Law of Liberty: It gives Liberty in all it enjoines: It gives Liberty by compassionating the Infirmities of Mankind: It gives Liberty to all Conditions of Life, to Governments, and Societies: Such a Liberty, as every Wise man would make choice of, and is condemn'd by none but Madmen or Fools: Such a Liberty, as the Spirits of Just men made perfect are possess'd of: Such a Liberty, as Angels a Superior Order of Beings, which are free and unconfined as Air, continually enjoy: Lastly, such a Liberty, as God himself enjoyes, who has tyed himself up to the Eternal Rules of Truth and Justice, and cannot do what is Evil, what is repugnant to his Divine Nature and Attributes.

As to the second Objection from the seventh Chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, ^b ὅτι πεθλιμωμένος ὁδός, That the Way to Life is Narrow, or as it may be render'd, *Pressing* and *Afflicting*: And as to the other Texts of Scripture; 'Tis to be observed,

a Τί πλέον ἐπιζητᾷ, εἰ τὸ παρὸν ἔργον ζῶν τοῦτο Εἰ καπνικός, καὶ ιστός Θεῖ. Marc. Anton. Lib. 8. cap. 2. Edit. Oxon. b. Πείσαι γὰρ αὐτὴν οὐδεὶς ιστὸς φίρεσσαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀληθινὴν Παρθένον; οὐδὲς, ἐφη, ἀνω τόπον τούτον ἐκίνοι, ὅπερ ἀδεῖς κατοικεῖ, ἀλλὰ ἐρημόθερην δοκεῖ εἶναι; οὐδὲ. Οὐκέτι γὰρ θύεσσε πλάκατα, Εἰ οὐταναντεῖ τὸ θύεσσα, οὐτες δὲ πολὺ οὐχ λεῖται, ἀλλὰ πάντα οὐλίγος πορεύεσσαν, οὐταντεῖ δυνατός τούτος γὰρ τροχείας Εἰ πετρώδης εἶναι δοκείσσει; καὶ μάλιστα, ἐφη. Tabula Ceb. Πᾶς ἐμπεριερχόμενος ἐλεγε, στὴν ί πύλην Εἰ πεθλιμένην οὐδέτο; οὐτονομάζει μετρητής, οὐτονομάζει τούτην εἰρημένην, ἐλαφροῦ έστι τὸ φορτίον. D Chrysost. that

that when our Saviour obviates those Temptations, his Disciples might have to neglect, the Rules he gave them; he only affirms, That those who would approve and practice his Law, such were the Corruptions of Human Nature, would be but Few in Comparison of those, who gave themselves up to their own Vicious Inclinations. And that if those who were of the World, hated his Followers, 'twas because their Dispositions and Tempers were opposite. He no where affirms that the Doctrines were difficult in themselves, or to such whose minds were prepared to receive them, but only to those, who were carnal, natural, and not led by the Spirit. He therefore charges his Disciples not to be offended or scandalized, when such as pursued no other Studies, but such as related to this Life, should hate and abhor them, and be ready to persecute them, and do them all manner of Evil. 'Twas their Duty to consider, That this Scum and Refuse of Men, hated him their Lord, before it hated them; That 'twas the product of Ignorance, Malice, or both, because they were the Objects of his Love, *and were chosen out of the World, and therefore the World hated them.* They ought to glory, That they were purifyed, refined, and made acceptable in the Furnace of Affliction; That they had the Honour to be dealt with as Sons; that by their suffering with Him, they might at last Reign with him, and be glorified together.

What is press'd from Experience, That all those who will live Godly, must suffer Persecution; That, indeed was too often verified, in the *First Ages* of the Christian Church; But now it hath pleased God to advance his Church above those Primitive Streights, and to incorporate the Concerns of Religion

ligion with those of Government, such severe and extraordinary Methods which seem'd necessary for it's first Settlement, are not requisite for it's Continuance when once Establish'd. This Particular, Reformed Church especially, has reason to bless God, that it has not been toss'd with such Tempests, or made afraid with such Storms; If we only except the imminent Danger from some *False Brethren, who from the Height of Spiritual Pride, and sufficiency, pronounced all it's Members Accursed, Excommunicate, and their very Prayers turn'd into Sin:* If we only except the Once Actual, and at other times the imminent Danger from a Superstitious, Idolatrous, Persecuting Religion's breaking in upon it, had not God looked down from Heaven, beheld, visited, and protected this Vine, which his own Right Hand had Planted.

All the Difficulties, (If they may be called such) which now Press upon those, who are Members of this pure Branch of Christ's Church, especially Those who wait at the Altar, are only *To quit themselves like Men and be Strong*, and not to be guided by Humour or Party, but Truth and Honesty: If they have once bound their Souls with an Oath to the Supreme Power, and which they know, not to be Conditionally Obligatory, not then through Interest or Irreligion to recede from it: Not to Oppose the Mitre to, or Exalt it above the Crown, or turn the Sword upon the Person of Him to whom God has committed the Power of it: Not to be Confederate against him with Hand or Heart, when they Profess it at the same time as their Principle, That those who do such things resist the Ordinance of Heaven, and cannot escape the Judgment of God. All the Difficulties are, only to take

care

care to be consistent, and never to be quoted against themselves : To be fixed in Principles, Uniform in Practice : Not to approve and disapprove a Thing at the same time, or run from one Contrariety to another : Not at Every Turn, to throw by their former Resolutions, as Travelers do their Cloaths, which are no longer fashionable, and take others which suit better with their present Occasions ; Or to suffer those few years which produce an Alteration in their Bodies to change their Minds : Not, on the one hand, To fire that World which they were sent by Preaching but to Warm, nor on the other, By Asserting *Christ's Kingdom not of this World*, Thereby to Overturn, and Confound all Ecclesiastical Polity, Decency, and Order : If a Great Man bids them go from their Duty, their Religion, their God, and he'll promote them to Great Honour, Not to go : If Interest bids them come, When 'tis against a Honour and Conscience, Not to Come : And if the great Enemy of Mankind intice them for Worldly Considerations, to fall down and Worship him, Not to do it : Not to attempt any *Reformation* of a *Reformation*, or make any Steps and Approaches towards *Rome* or *Geneva*, but *utterly to abhor it, for 'tis an accursed Thing* : They must not be Honest by Chance, or Religious by Fits : They must not owe their Religion, as some Men do their Honour, to their Birth and not their Understanding : They must make Profession of it, because 'tis a *Reasonable Service*, and

a The Fathers of our Church strictly observed this Rule, in the Reign of King James the Second. And to say, That they invited over the Prince of Orange, at the same time they were *Persuading K. James*, is an Assertion as false as 'tis malicious : As the Two Worthy surviving Prelates, can testify.

not because, 'Tis *Profitable for all Things*: They must not Use their Religion as *Moses* did his Rod, while it continued a Rod, he used it familiarly, but when it became a Serpent he fled from it: In short, They must not step aside into the *Way of Evil Men*, *Winnow with every Wind*, or be *unstable in their Wayes*: They must not truckle and comply with the Proposals of Such, as would have them *let go their Integrity*; Or make the weak, the Sottish Choice of those, who had rather be mean and little in their Actions than in their Fortunes.

I shall here give in short, the Characters of a *Worldly Wise Man*: And of one, *Who is Wise for Himself*, by being a True Member of our *Established Church*. The former as drawn by a great *Historian* and *Statesman*, and the latter, by a *Learn'd and judicious Prelate*. The words of the first, are as follow;

"The worldly wise man knows, that there is no other inferior or apparent Cause, why so many Worthy and Wise men, depend upon so many unworthy, empty, external Men, without Ker-
nel: and why so many Learned, Virtuous, and Valiant men, wear out their Lives in dejected Estates; beside the Partiality of Man's affection, and the fashioning or not fashioning themselves, according to the nature of the Times. He knows, That he who is most able, and best sufficient to discern, and hath withal an honest and open Heart, and loving Truth, since Princes indure no other discourse than their own Flatteries, shall ever more hang under the Wheel. He knows, That whosoever shall tell any Great Man or Magistrate that he is not Just: The General of an Army,

“Army, that he is not Valiant; and *Great La-*
“*dies*, that they are not fair; shall never be made
“a Counsellor, a Captain, or a Courtier. He knows,
“tis not sufficient to be *Wise* with a *Wise Prince*,
“Valiant with a Valiant, and *Just* with him that is
“*Just*; but he must also change with the *Succe-*
“*sor*, if he be of contrary *Qualities*; Sail with the
“*Tyde* of the *Time*; and alter Form and Condi-
“*tion*, as the *Estate* or *Estates* Master changeth.
“That so by a counterfeit-kind of Wondering at
“other Men, and making them believe, That all
“their *Vices* are *Virtues*, and all their *dusty*
“Actions *Christalline*, he may attain Honour and
“Riches, and prosper equally with the most Vir-
“tuous, if not exceed them. He knows, That eve-
“ry Fool is won with his own *Pride*, and *Others*
“flattering *Applause*: so as whosoever will live al-
“together out of Himself, and study other Mens
“Humours, and observe them, shall never be Un-
“fortunate; and on the Contrary, He is satisfied,
“That that *Man*, which prizeth *Truth* and *Vir-*
“*tue*, (except the season wherein he liveth be of
“all these, and of all sorts of *Goodness*, fruitful)
“shall never Prosper by the *Possession* or *Profes-*
“*sion* thereof. He knows, That if *Cicero* had fol-
“lowed the *Counsel* of his Brother *Quintus*, he
“might have dyed the death of *Nature*, and been
“buried with an undissevered Body. He knows
“that to contend with his own *Times*, is to be the
“Author of his own *Misery*; and that best it were
“to follow the advice, which the *Pope* gave the
“*Bishop* of that *Age*, out of *Ovid*, while the *Ari-*
“*an* *Heresy* raged: *Dum furor in Cursu est, Currenti*
“*cede furori*; He in all things aims at *Machiavel's*
“two *Marks* to shoot at, *Riches*, and *Glory*, and

“can Hoysē and strike his Sailes, as the diverse Na-
“tures of Calmes and Stormes require.

The Character drawn by the latter, is in the fol-
lowing words;

“He is one cordially and conscientiously Zea-
“lous for the Church, as established by Law. He
“lays the foundation of all that he Believes in
“the Christian Religion, in the Scriptures: These
“and these only are the Measures and Standard of
“his Faith. No great Names nor Shews of Au-
“thority over awe him: He searches the Scriptures,
“there he seeks and finds his Faith.

“He thinks that *in Matters* declared to be *inde-
“rent*, no Harm could follow on it, if some Regard
“were had to the Scruples of those who divide
“from us, in order to the fortifying the Whole, by
“uniting us among our selves: But till that can be
“done, He thinks a kind Deportment towards
“Them softens their *Prejudices*, and *disposes* them to
“*hearken to the Reasons which are offer'd to them*, with
“all the Force possible, but without the asperity
“of Words, or a contemptuous Behaviour.

“He does indeed make a great Difference be-
“tween Dissenters and Papists: He considers the
“one as a Handful of People, not capable of do-
“ing us much Mischief. He has another and very
“different Opinion of Popery: He considers that
“Church not only with Relation to the many
“Opinions and Practices held by them, such as
“Transubstantiation, Purgatory, and the Worship-
“ing Saints and Images, and a great many more:
“He is perswaded that these are false and ill ground-
“ed, but he could easily bear with them, as he
“does with others errors: But he considers Po-
“perty

“ pery as a Conspiracy against the Liberty and
“ Peace of Mankind, on design to engross the
“ Wealth of the World into their own hands: and
“ to destroy all that stand in their way, sticking
“ at no Practice, how false, base, or cruel soever,
“ that can advance this. This is the true Ground
“ of his Zeal against Popery, and indeed against
“ every thing that has a Tendency that way.

“ The Pretending to an Independency of the
“ Church on the State, is not only in his Opinion
“ a plain Attack made on the Supremacy vested by
“ Law in the Crown, and a casting a Disgrace
“ on our Reformers, and on every Step made in
“ the Reformation, which are openly owned by
“ the chief Promoters of this New Conceit: But it
“ is a direct Opposition to the famed Place so much
“ stretched by the same Persons to serve other Pur-
“ poses, in the 13th to the Romans, *Let every Soul*
“ *be subject to the Higher Powers*; in which, all Sub-
“ jects are equally comprehended. The Laws of
“ God are certainly of a Superior Obligation to
“ any human Authority, but where these Laws are
“ silent, certainly all Subjects of what fort soever,
“ are bound to obey the Laws of the Land where
“ they live.

“ The raising the Power and Authority of Sa-
“ cred Functions beyond what is founded on clear
“ Warrants in Scripture, is He thinks, the readiest
“ way to give the World such a Jealousy of them,
“ and such an Aversion to them, as may make
“ them lose the Authority that they ought to have,
“ while they pretend to that, they have not.

“ He dares not Unchurch *All* the Bodies of the
“ Protestants beyond Sea; nor deny to our Dis-
“ senters at home, the federal rights common to

“All Christians. He does not annul their Baptisms, “or think that they ought to be baptized again “in a more regular Manner, before they can be “accounted Christians. He knows of no Power in “a Priest to pardon Sin, other than the declaring “the Gospel Pardon, upon the Conditions on “which it is offered. He knows of no Sacrifice in “the Eucharist, other than the Commemorating “that on the Cross, with the Oblation of the Pray- “ers, Praises, and Almsgiving, prescribed in the “Office. He is far from Condemning Private “Judgment in Matters of Religion: This strikes at “the root of the whole Reformation, which could “never have been compassed, if private Men have “not a Right to judge for themselves; On the con- “trary, he thinks every Man is bound to judge “for himself, which indeed he ought to do, in “the fear of God, and with all Humility and Cau- “tion. He looks on all these Notions as steps to- “wards Popery; Though he does not conclude, “that all those who have made them, designed that “by so doing.

“This is a short account of the *Church of England* “man’s Notions, with Relation to Matters of Re- “ligion among us: As to our temporal Concerns, “he thinks all that Obedience and Submission that “is settled by our Laws, to the Persons of Our “Princes, ought to be paid them for Conscience “sake: But if a misguided Prince shall take on him “to dissolve our Constitution, and to subject the “Laws to his Pleasure, he thinks, that if God of- “fers a Remedy, it is to be received with all Thank- “fulness. For these Reasons, He continues Faith- “ful and True to the *Settlement* made; and to “the *Subsequent Settlements*. He thinks there is a “full

“full Power in the *Legislature* to settle the Crown, “and to secure the *Nations*; and so takes the *Oaths* “enjoyed with a good Conscience, and with fixed “Resolutions of adhering firmly to them, without “any other Views, but such as the Laws and the “Oaths pursuant to them do direct. He knows of “no *unalterable* or *indefeasible* Right, but what is “founded on the Law.

“This is his fixed Principle; and he is the more “fixed in this, when he remembers, that a Prince “educated among us, and singularly obliged by “the Zeal our Church expressed for his advance- “ment to the Throne, upon which he made great “Acknowledgments and Promises, and who by “his Temper seemed as much inclin'd to keep “them, as his Religion could admit of; yet upon “his Elevation did so entirely forget all this, that “he seem'd peculiarly sharpened against those, “who of all others had the least reason, to have “expected it from him.

“This was Notorious and Evident. What then “can be imagined, but that Popery is still the same “cruel, and bloody Conspiracy against Protestants “that it was.

“It bewrayes a monstrous ignorance of the Prin- “ciples and Maxims, as well as of the *History of* “Popery, to imagine that they can ever depart “from the design of extirpating *Hereticks*, settled “by so much Authority, held Sacred by them. Every “Look, in the Opinion of an honest and true “Church man, towards any Popish Prince, is to “him, both Perjury and Treason.

Thus far that Learned Prelate; who was so
thoroughly acquainted with our Constitution, both
Church and State.

The

The last Objection I mentioned, was the Command, to Love our Enemies. And this is no such difficult Task, or Unnatural Precept, if we distinguish, and make a difference between the ^a Man and his Vices. We are no where commanded to set our Affections upon, or to Love what is Evil; but then we must Honour, Reverence, and Love the Image of God, where ever we find it; We must always respect the Man, who is still the Image though not ^b the likeness of his Maker; but we can never have too high a Detestation of Injustice, Lying, Detraction, Shuffling, Prevarication, and all manner of Sin and Vice, which at long run become Constitutional, render Men just the Reverse of their Saviour, and cause in them the Similitude of the Devil.

This is that Peculiar Command of our Saviour, the Prince of Peace, which carries Christianity infinitely beyond all other Institutions; in so much, That *Athenagoras* challenged any Person, to show the like, in all the Writings of the Philosophers.

And thus it appears from what has been said, That nothing makes Religion difficult but Cor-

^a Multa in *Euphrate* eminent; disputat subtiliter, graviter, ornate, frequenter etiam Platonica illam sublimitatem & latitudinem effingit. Ad hoc, nullus horror in cultu, nulla tristitia, multum severitatis: reverentis occursum non reformides. *Vitæ sanctitas summa, Comitas pat. Infectatur Vtia non Homines: Nec castigat Errantes sed emendat.* Plin. Epist. Lib. 1. Clementi suo.

Vide *Max. Tyrium* Dissert. 2da.

Οὐτοὶ κράτις οὐτοὶ ἀνὴρ,

["]Ος τις ἀδικῶντος πλεῖς ἵπτεται βροτῶν. *Men.*

["]Ιδοις ἀνθρώπους φιλεῖν καὶ τὰς πτωμάτας, οὐκ οὐχίστεναι, &c. *Marc. Ant. Lib. 7. c. 22.* Τὸ δὲ ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἔχθρας, ἀνὴρ ἀγαπᾶν τὸ παχός λόγον, οὐδὲ ἀποστολα, οὐ μηχαίνειν, οὐ κλεπτεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὸ κλεπτην, οὐ τὸ ἀστοῦ, οὐ τὸ μοιχεῖον, οὐ παῦσιν αἰρεῖν, Εἰ τὴ ποιᾶ σύνεγεια μολύνει τὴν ἀνθρώπους αεροπορείαν· καθ' ὃ δὲ ἀλεξίστεται, Εἴργοις Θεοῦ. *Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 4. p. 605. Edit. Potteriane.* b *Con-*

Scholasticos.

rupt

rupt Nature; Nothing renders the Way to Life strait and unpassable but the swelling our Sins and Transgressions to too great a Bulk; Nothing makes it a Yoke and Burden but Mens idle Fancy; their not taking it up aright at first, and with a willing Mind, their not letting it set close and steady upon them, when 'tis once on; their not fixing their Mind and Thoughts on the Wages and Gift of Eternal Life promised to those, who with Patience submit to it and bear it; their not considering the End of their Labour, that they must all in a short time be changed, and lay these Yokes and Burdens down, that *this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality*, that the Sting of Death and Victory of the Grave shall be no more; our Yokes and Burdens shall be changed for Scepters and Crowns of Glory, Honour, and Immortality; Vision shall take place of our Faith, Fruition and Injoyment of our Hope, and those short Toiles and Afflictions which are but for a Moment, work for us, Everlasting Rest and Happiness.

Thus it appears that the Christian Religion, is a Religion that dares be understood; a Religion that offers it self to the search of the most Inquisitive, to the Inspection of the severest and most awaken'd Reason: a Religion which being secure

and

a Were all who make a Shew of Religion in the World really such as they pretend to be, discourses on the Reasonableness, Truth, and Excellency of it, would be no more seasonable than the commendations of a great *Beauty* to one who is already a passionate admirer of it; but on the contrary we see how common it is for Men first to throw *dis* in the face of Religion, and then perswade themselves it is its natural Complexion; they represent it to themselves in a *Shape* least pleasing to them, and then bring that as a *Plea* why they give it no better Entertainment. It may justly seem strange, that true Religion, which contains

and Conscious of her substantial Truth, Innocence, Purity, and Beauty, knows that for her to be seen and look'd into, is to be embraced and admired; as there needs no greater, no more persuasivo Argument for Men to be charm'd with and Love the Light, than to see it.

Thus it appears that the Practice of Religion and guiding our Lives by Rule, is so far from creating Trouble, that the Christian Faith is the only Pilot which can so guide our actions, as to prevent a general Shipwreck of those sublime, and Spiritual Virtues, Qualifications, and Graces, which can alone make us easy and Happy here, which can alone procure us Ease and Felicity hereafter. And whatever a Set of Lewd, Debauched, Atheistical, *Freethinking Apostates* may imagine, That to throw off all thoughts of Religion, and to cast this

tains nothing in it but what is truely Noble and Generous, most rational and pleasing to the Spirits of all good Men, should yet suffer so much in its esteem in the world, through those strange and uncouth Wizards it is represented under: Some accounting the Life and Practice of it, as it speaks subduing our *Wills* to the *Will of God* (which is the Substance of all Religion) a thing too low and mean for their rank and condition in the World, while others pretend a quarrel against the Principles of it, as *Unsatisfactory to human Reason*. Thus Religion suffers with the Author of it between two *Thieves*, and it is hard to define which is most injurious to it, that which questions the *Principles*, or that which despiseth the *Practice* of it. And nothing certainly will more incline men to believe that we live in an *Age of Prodigies*, than that there should be any such in the Christian World who should account it a piece of *Grazing* to despise Religion, and a piece of *Reason* to be *Atheists*. For if there be any such thing in the World as a true *height and Magnanimity of Spirit*, if there be any *Reason and depth of Judgment*, they are not only consistent with, but only attainable by a *true, generous Spirit of Religion*. Bishop Stillingfleet. *Orig. Sacr.* *iii. old.* Twas the Charge of Julian against the Primitive Christians, *δια την το πιστων πρωτηγειαν ειναι οφειλεις*. They were called in Contempt *Piars*, though they had Demonstration for their Belief: Reason for the Hope that was in them: though the Foundation of their Faith stood sure, and the Grounds of it were Evident, though the Object were *Things Unseen*.

Yoke

Yoke from them, to fear nothing, to hope for nothing, to stifle the Dictates of Conscience, and by going a continual Round in the Circle of Luxury to indeavour to drive away the sense of Duty, and to live without God in the World; however some Men may imagine such a Course of Life, to be a State of Peace, Ease, and Pleasure; yet after all, 'twill be found ineffectual, when there is but one Sober minute, the thoughts of the Possibility of an Almighty Being which is able to kill or keep alive, to save or to destroy, will crowd in, and the Fit of Shivering and Distraction (as it did in *Belsazar*) damp all their Mirth, and seize them with the greater Violence, *Their Countenance shall be changed, their Thoughts troubled, the Joints of their Loins loosened, and their Knees smite one against another.*

Let Men study and contrive as long as they please, 'twill after all be found most Certain, That there is a God whose Works are Truth, his Ways Judgment, and that those who walk in Pride, he is able to abase: That he has sent his Son into the World, who has instituted a Church upon Earth: That the Sons of Levi have not taken too much upon them, and that all the Congregation is not equally holy. Let men study and contrive as long as they please, 'twill after all be found a certain Truth, That without Virtue and Religion, what we count the greatest Blessings of Life, would prove the greatest Curse and vexation: without Virtue and Religion it would be next to impossible, to make the bitter Draught of Life go down, and the ^a World would not be worth living in.

^a Η δὲ τὸν ὄντα, οὐτὸς μηδὲν αὐτῷ τὸν θεραπεῖαν, τι μη ζῆν τὸν οὐρανὸν Θεῖν, οὐ προνοίαν κτίνει; *Marc. Ant. Lib. 2. cap. II.*

Having thus represented the Weakness of those Arguments, which some Men make use of, to prove Christianity an uneasy Course of Life, and that to become such as it's Blessed Author, the Sons of God, We must cease to be Men ; I shall now,

In the Last place make a brief Reflection or two from what has been deliver'd.

First, Is Christianity a Reasonable Service, are its Doctrines easy to be Believed, and profitable when Practised ; Is it the only Sauce which can give a Taste and Relish to all inferior Things ; are length of daies in its right hand, and in its left Riches and Honour ; is the Observance of it accompanied with Blessings Temporal and Spiritual ; do's it certainly deliver our Souls from all Trouble and Anxiety, and as certainly restore that Life, Vigour, and Felicity lost by the Fall of our First Parents : Let this prevail so far upon Us, as not to run counter to our Reason and Understandings, or to Act beneath our selves.

Secondly, Let us not add Weight to this Yoke, through Pride, Conceit, or Enthusiasm, but take it up as 'tis deliver'd to us from our Saviour, and his Apostles, in the Scriptures, as explained by the Fathers of the Primitive Church : Let us submit our selves to it's Dominion and Power, by striving to promote in all things God's Glory, and our own Salvation : *Let no Man intrude into those Things which be hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy Mind,*

α Ἐπι γνωστῶν αὐτῆς τὸ ἀγαθόν, τοσῶντι ἡ ἀσφάλεια, τοσῶντι δόξην, πάντοι ψυχῆς, πάντοι σπειδῆ, τέτοι ἐλκυσθρὸν τὸ ζυγόν. οὐαὶ εἰ σὸν μὲν οὐαντοῦ σύνεσθι ταῖς ψυχοῖς ημῶν, οὐ τὸ μελλόντον ἐπιτύχειν ἀγαθῶν. D. Chrysost.

and

and with an *Appearance of Learning*, but *Real Distraction* expound away those Fundamental Doctrines, by the holding of which, *as the Head*, he can alone be Saved; **THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY**, and the **GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOUR**. Let us stedfastly Believe, that plain Revelation God has made; (not implicitly as a late Writer advises,) Let us do the Will of Christ, that we may know his Doctrine and Precepts to be of God and not of Man: And Let us trust his Providence.

Thirdly and lastly, Christ himself has confirm'd it to us, that if we take upon Us his Easy Yoke and Light Burden, and run with Patience the Race that is set before Us, we shall enter into his Rest, and find Rest unto our Souls; than which there cannot be a greater Incouragement. *A Rest*, from all Afflictions which may incompaſſ, may indanger, or may oppreſſ Us: *A Rest*, with *Kings and Counſellers of the Earth*: and with *Princes that had Gold, who fill'd their houses with Silver*: *Where the Wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the Weary are at Ease*: *Where the Prisoners rest together, and bear not the voice of the Oppreſſor*: *Those who dye the Death of the Righteous, and ſleep in Jesus, both ſmall and great, ſhall be there; and there the Servant is free from his Master*. In a word, *A Rest* as laſting as our Beings, and as large as the utmoſt Stretch of our Wiſhes and Desires.

To Conclude, under this Yoke, this Dominion, this Law of the Son of God, the Everlaſting Counſeller, the Prince of Peace, we ſhall be taught the

^a The best Way for all the Sects of Christianity is to be ſilent, and to believe what the Scripture ſays, without troubling themſelves, whether that it Teaches, agrees with the Light of Reason or No. Bayle's *Diff.*

Path of Judgment, receive Knowledge and Wisdom, and be instructed in the Way of Understanding: Under this Yoke, *Happy* shall we be as far as the Faculties of our Souls and Bodies are capable of being raised: *Happy* in an even, temperate Frame and Disposition of Body and Mind, here in this Life: and when the Night of Death, and Sleep of the Grave shall be over, the Morning of the Resurrection, dawn, and the Son of Righteousness shine forth in Power and great Glory, *Happy* thereby receiving our Bodies, freed from all Diseases, Infirmitiess, and Corruption, and made Spiritual Glorious, Heavenly; never again to be subjected to Pain or Sorrow, Trouble or Weariness, when Sickness and Death shall be no more: *Happy* like wife in all the Powers of our Mind and Soul; in the Clearness of our Knowledge, the Virtue of our Wills, the exact, the regular, the constant Movement of our Affections, to what only is holy, what is just, and what is good: *Happy* in being admitted into the Society of Just Men made perfect, in Conversing with Saints and Angels, with the General Assembly of the First born in Heaven, and with Jesus our Mediator and Redeemer: *Happy* in seeing God as he is, Face to Face, and alway Adoring Blessing, Praising his Divine Majesty, Goodness, and Mercy which indure for ever. In short, *Inexpressibly Happy* shall we be, in the Enjoyment of all Blessings Temporal and Spiritual here; *Unconceivably Happy* in Eternal Peace, Joy, and Rest hereafter.

The Peace of God which passeth all Understanding keep your Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be among You, and remain with You, always.